

A
 REVIEW
 OF THE
 STATE
 OF THE
 BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, January 18. 1709.

IN my Last I told you a very terrible Story, I confess, a Story that has in it something very melancholly, as well as something surprizing— It is melancholly to reflect, that in a Land of such a civil Government, such wholesome Laws, such a regular Constitution, and above all under such a Governour, such a Thing should be found. Again, 'tis yet more melancholly to reflect, that this should be found among our Teachers, among the Clergy, and at last among the superiour Clergy— It is also surprizing, that the Disciplinary Part of the *English* Church should be thus remissly manag'd, that whereas we all know, Provision is sufficiently made by the Discipline of the Church of *England*, for the correcting the Disorders of the

Clergy, those, who have the Government of the Church, should hold the Reins so slack, and let such black Things as these pass unpunish'd.

Nor am I at all exposing the Church of *England* in this, I am sure it is far from my Design, *let them take it as they please, That I am wholly unconcern'd about—* But on the contrary, if any Man asks me, why I have expos'd this Story, I answer, purely and sincerely, *as far as in me lies*, to provoke the Heads of the Church to enter seriously into some Methods, to remove these abominable Things from among them, that their Enemies may have no Room to reproach their Discipline and Government, and to give scandalous black Lists of their debauch'd Clergy; if this be not a Service

vice to the Church in their Esteem, I am sorry for their Eye Sight.

In short, Gentlemen of the Church of England, if you will bear a Word or two from one that is a Friend to your Reformation, take it thus; The Church of England will never maintain her Name in the World, keep up her Reputation, defend herself against the *Dissenters*, and stand her Ground against Schism and Errors, till she revives her Discipline, and restores the Morals of her Clergy—— This Nation will never make any substantial Progress in the Work of Reformation, whether of Religion or of Manners, till the Ministers in the Church, and the Magistrates in the State will be pleas'd to reform *themselves*, or are reform'd by their Superiors.

To bear a Minister of the Church Blaspheme that Blessed Name, by which he is, or pretends to be call'd; to see a Preacher of Righteousness be a Belcher of Oaths, a Guide to Salvation be a Defier and Insulter of Heaven; to hear a Minister swear and curse—*Thou that preachest that Men should not steal, DOST THOU steal? Thou that sayest that Men should not commit Adultery, DOST THOU commit Adultery? Thou that abhorrest Idols, DOST THOU commit Sacrilege; for the Name of GOD is blasphemed among the Gentiles THROUGH YOU? Rom. 2. 21, 22, 23.*

Is this the Way to honour the Vocation, and lead by the Hand the dark World into the Light of Truth? —— Is this the Way to preserve or secure the Church? No, nor will the Church of England be ever secur'd, till her Discipline is restor'd, and some new Course taken to put her Canon strictly in Execution against all Manner of Vice, but especially among her Clergy: To say a Church can be safe, when she is not reform'd in Morals, *I mean her Ministers*; when her Instructions are debauch'd, when the Sons of the Church become Sons of Sodom, and Guides to the Devil, is to say, what we have very little Ground to hope for—— A Minister of the Gospel, by how much the more Honourable he is by Office, Sacred in Person, and Reverend in Name, by so much the more odious and contemptible he grows, when he abandons his Morals, and gives himself a Loose in Debauchery——

Nay, as they are Men most capable of serving GOD and their Country when sober, and prescrib'd so; I think, when they give *themselves up*, they prove the worst of Men—— They turn the Diametrical Opposites to the Employ they are dedicated to, they grow Factors of Hell, and Stock-Jobbers for the Devil; they drive Men to Destruction, and damn more by their Example, than they recover by their Doctrine—— I will not say, but a wicked Minister may by his Preaching be the Means of converting a Sinner; this may be; but we are too sure, that he is the Cause, humanly speaking, of the hardening many—— *By the first*, like an unskilful Horseman, he opens the Gate on the wrong side, lets other Folks through, and shuts himself out; *but by the last*, he holds Hell-Gate open, and like the Bell-Wether Sheep jumping in himself, the hare-brain'd Flock all jump in after him.

Let us now make Parallels; Do other Churches do thus, who have any Concern among them for the Honour of Religion in the World? Not the Protestant Churches abroad, not the Dutch, not the *Dissenters* at home, not the Scots Presbyterian Church: No, Gentlemen, you that have endeavour'd to blacken her all you can, reproach'd her Judicatories, and contemn'd her Ministry—— You have not once attempted to blame her Discipline; you have pretended they have depos'd Men innocent, *tho' that is not made out either*, but you cannot pretend the Guilty are conniv'd at, and her Clergy let run out into Excesses and Immoralities.

Now let no Man mistake me, I am not here making Comparisons of the Lives and Conversation of the Church of England Clergy with the *Dissenters*, or with the Clergy of the Church of Scotland, *black Lists are none of my Design*, nor do I delight to be raking in the Lay-Scall of Human Infirmary; Ministers are Men of like Passions with our selves, subject to Crime and Excursions as well as other Men, and ought to be punish'd as severely, or indeed more severely than other Men, for by how much more they are exemplary in their Practices. But this Comparison I must make, *viz.* That, *it seems to me*, there are the most vicious Clergymen suffer'd, and the fewest punish'd in the Church of England, of

of any Church or Society of Religions in these Parts of the World, take it in Proportion to the Number, and this is not owing to a Defect of Power or a Defect of Law, but a meer Defect of Practice. The Discipline of the Church of *England* has a true Edge to cut off all these Scandals, and if executed vigorously and exactly, is as well calculated for the Restraint of Vice, both in Teacher and Hearer; but what's the Law without an executive Application? What's the Discipline of the Church, unless the Diocesan puts the Spirit of Reformation into those, whose Business it is to restore that Discipline to its full Exercise? I am not speaking to the Dishonour of the Church of *England* at all, 'tis the Honour of the Church of *England* to have a very good Discipline; my Proposal is, to enquire whose Fault it is, that this *very good Discipline* is not put into a vigorous Exercise, that Vice and abominable Scandals may be purg'd out of this Nation, *beginning at the Sanctuary.*

When we have formerly spoken of the Looseness, Prophaneness and Immorality of the inferior Clergy in *England*, the general Answer is, *Well, well*, your Dissenting Ministers are so, and so too; and so IF THEY CAN, and much Pains it costs them to search, but find a Man of Crime among the Dissenters, they post him up to excuse their own—— But really, Gentlemen, this is not the just Enquiry—— Will you come to this?—— Who has the most vicious, wicked, debauched Clergymen, that are openly known to be such, permitted, conniv'd at, and remaining uncur'd among them—— It is not a Reproach to any Church or Body of Professors, to have Hypocrites, and Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing among them, any more than it was a Reproach to the Twelve Apostles, that one of them was a Devil; but the Reproach is, when this Devil is known, and yet suffer'd, embrac'd and let go unpunish'd.

On this Head, we may challenge the Adversaries of the Church of *Scotland* to tell us, where are the Men of Crime and Scandal among their Ministers, who remain so uncur'd, and who are not brought immediately to Justice? No, Gentlemen, I assure

you, there is not one Minister in the whole Church, who dares give himself a Loose in Vice; he would immediately be brought before the proper Judges of the Bounds, be gradually, and according to Fact rebuk'd, censur'd, suspended, depriv'd, depos'd—— No Minister in *Scotland* could say in one of their Presbyteries, *G—d d—mn the People, if they would not go to such a Church, they might go the D...!*; He would be a Minister in that Church but a very few Hours after it.

The Want of Discipline in a Church must certainly expose that Church to fatal Inconveniencies—— What would all the Preaching of the Disciples have been, and what Impression would it have made, if Judas had not been cast out from among them? Ye complain of Schismatics and Dissenting from the Establish'd Church—— I tell ye freely, Gentlemen, you are the Men that make Dissenters, that establish them, and encrease their Number; you, who having the Rod of Discipline in your Hands, suffer the vicious Lives of your own Clergy to make the Holy Things of GOD odious to the People by their scandalous Behaviour, and take no Regard to punish it; These are the Men, who like the Sons of ELI, make Men *abhor the Offering of the Lord*, 1 Sam. 2. 17. — And what said Old Bishop ELI to them? Truly Nothing; but, *say my Sons, for it is no good Report that I hear of you, &c.* v. 24. and the rest of that Chapter will tell you, how GOD resented his Coldness of Discipline, and punish'd it upon ELI himself, as well as he did the Crime upon his Sons—— Whereas, Phineas the Son of Eleazar, who in his warmer Zeal slabb'd Zimri and Cosbi in the Act of their prophane Love, has the most remarkable Blessing of a Covenant of Peace, and an Everlasting Priesthood immediately from GOD Himself, Numbers 25. 13.

The Application is short, The Reverend Father, who being offended with the Carriage of the Monster we are now talking of, gave him a Reproof, as I noted in my last, *Viz. That he carry'd it more like a Captain of a Fireship than a Prebendary of ——* He *is* just like Old ELI, with a *Nay my Son, it is no good Report to hear you swear and curse*